

**Handling Lost, Stolen, and Misused Meal Tickets  
and Replacement Fees for Tickets**

**Purpose:**

This instruction sets forth the policy for students who report lost or stolen meal tickets and replacement fees for lost meal tickets.

**Scope:**

Sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Food Distribution Program (FDP), and Special Milk Program (SMP).

**Definition:**

Ticket refers to any and all forms of exchange used in the school or institution's food service collection system including daily, weekly, or monthly paper, tickets, cards, coins, or tokens.

**Description:**

When handling missing tickets, schools do not need to issue a replacement ticket if appropriate meal arrangements are made such as accompanying the student through the cafeteria line. School Food Authorities may establish their own procedures, except any system which limits the number of tickets reissued must conform to the standards identified below:

1. Parents and students must be advised in writing of the school's policy regarding missing meal tickets and of the student's responsibility for their tickets. Notice will be provided to all households at the time applications are distributed or upon approval for free or reduced price meal benefits.
2. A minimum of three ticket replacements or special meal arrangements resulting from three lost or stolen tickets must be allowed for each student within a school year.
3. The school must maintain a list of students who have reported missing original tickets in the current school year and the number of occurrences for each student. Prior to denying a meal to any student without a ticket, the list should be reviewed to determine if the student has already had at least three ticket replacements or special meal arrangements for lost or stolen tickets within that school year.

4. At least one advance written notice must be given to the student and the guardian(s) prior to refusal. The written warning must include an explanation that the student has repeatedly requested replacement tickets, each subsequent time the student fails to have a ticket, and that he/she will be expected to either bring lunch or pay full price for lunch.
5. Meals must always be provided to preprimary and young primary students or for students with disabilities who may be unable to take full responsibility for a meal ticket.

By using the above criteria, School Food Authorities may develop the most administratively feasible system to handle missing tickets as determined by individual school circumstances and frequency of ticket issuance. School administrators may wish to contact an adult household member in cases of repeated loss or misuse.

It is recommended that the meal or ticket replacement policy for students missing free and reduced price tickets be extended to the loss of full price tickets. If such a uniform policy covering both needy and non-needy students is not implemented, schools must exercise care to prevent the overt identification of needy students when reissuing free or reduced price meal tickets or making arrangements to provide meals to students whose tickets are missing.

**SOURCE:** FNS INSTRUCTION 765-7, REV. , DATED AUGUST 4, 1988, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE AND POLICY MEMORANDUM #15 DATED SEPTEMBER 9, 1992.